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The Agamemnon of Aeschylus

A. W. Verrall

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Thucydides, writing as a historian of a city on the borders of Attica, a city well known before its ruin to many of his readers, and occupied for a year after its fall by Megarians and others—a city too of which some of the heroic defenders lived at Athens—succeeded in palming off on his contemporaries a fictitious account of the siege? Or that he failed to distinguish between the city wall and the siege wall which surrounded it—a

mistake which hundreds could have corrected? Would no ancient author have pointed out the absurdity of his account, if it were as absurd as we are asked to believe? Is his history worth a moment's consideration, *if he could not* ascertain and tell the truth about a siege on the borders of Attica, in which every Athenian was interested?

EVELYN ABBOTT.

THE AGAMEMNON OF AESCHYLUS.

AN ADDENDUM.

IN a recent edition of the *Agamemnon* I endeavoured to show that there is error in the current hypothesis as to the story upon which the drama is founded, and also consequential error as to the *dramatis personae* and the distribution of the parts. By oversight and forgetfulness I omitted a piece of evidence which will, I believe, seem to many more weighty than any that I have actually adduced. I desire to bring it forward without delay, and have obtained the kind permission of the editor to do this in the *Classical Review*.

My criticism related (1) to the story, and (2) to the *dramatis personae*. It is important to bear in mind both the distinction and the interdependence of these two matters. The supposed story has for it the authority, whatever that may be worth, of the Greek hypothesis found in the MSS. The *dramatis personae* and distribution of the parts, which are given in our printed books, have not the authority of the MSS., nor any authority from tradition at all. They have been invented in modern times, indeed quite recently, and introduced in defiance of the MSS., in order to bring the text and the interpretation of the text, so far as might be, into tolerable conformity with the story supposed. This I have explained in my book. But when the book was printed and published I did not know, or rather had forgotten, that the modern cast of the play, as now commonly printed, conflicts not only with the MSS. of Aeschylus (which in such a matter would be little), but with other testimony far older and better, testimony indeed of the very best and strongest kind which we have on any subject connected with the ancient theatre. If we are to be ruled in this matter by tradition at all (which I do not assert or necessarily admit), we should at least prefer

the tradition of the second century to the tradition of the eleventh.

The principal representative of ancient scholarship in relation to Greek drama is of course Pollux. Writing in the full daylight of Graeco-Roman learning, he is a very different witness from the anonymous Byzantine revisers of the *Codex Mediceus*. It happens that we have from Pollux a note on the *dramatis personae* of the *Agamemnon*, which, though it deals directly only with a detail, presupposes and necessarily implies a certain view of the whole play. The passage runs as follows (Poll. iv. 109): ὁπότε μὴν ἀντὶ τέταρτου ὑποκριτοῦ δεοὶ τινὰ τῶν χορευτῶν εἰπεῖν ἐν ᾧδῃ, παρασκήνιον καλεῖται τὸ πρᾶγμα, ὡς ἐν Ἀγαμέμνονι Αἰσχύλου· εἰ δὲ τέταρτος ὑποκριτὴς τι παραφθέγγεται, τοῦτο παραχορήγημα ὀνομάζεται, καὶ πεπράχθαι φασὶν αὐτὸ ἐν Μέμνονι Αἰσχύλου. 'But whenever it was necessary that, in the place of a fourth actor, one of the chorus-performers should speak in lyric, this is called a *παρασκήνιον*: see for example the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus. If there were something incidentally spoken by a fourth actor, this is termed a *παραχορήγημα*: and it is said to have occurred in the *Memnon* of Aeschylus.'

The meaning of this is clear and undisputed. For the performance of a play there were commonly provided, in addition to the regular chorus, three actors trained for spoken parts. As a very general rule this number was the limit, and the plays were so written that not more than three persons (besides the *choreutae*), having parts to speak, should be before the audience at the same time. Pollux is here treating of the rare exceptions to this rule. He divides them into two kinds. The ordinary function of the three ὑποκριταί was to deliver the dialogue. The most natural conception there-

fore of a 'fourth actor' would be a person speaking in ordinary dialogue (ἐν λόγῳ) in a scene in which all the three regular ὑποκριταί were already occupied. Of this however, which is the case put second by Pollux, he seems not to have known by his own observation a single instance. 'It is said', he writes, 'to have occurred in the *Memnon* of Aeschylus,' which play he had plainly not read. His care in marking that he is here speaking at second hand is worthy of notice, and enhances the authority of what he states without such a limitation. The other, the first-mentioned exception, is of a very peculiar kind. It is where, in a scene requiring the simultaneous presence of the three regular actors, there is found another speaker who, being a *choreutes* and speaking in lyric, is not exactly a 'fourth actor', but, as Pollux words it, 'in the place of a fourth actor.' For this he refers, as if the case were plain and notorious, to the *Agamemnon*.

It will be seen on reflexion that there is a little difficulty in understanding the nature of this peculiar case. This 'quasi-actor', says Pollux, is 'one of the *choreutae*.' Why then, it might be asked, should not his part be delivered by the ordinary chorus-leader? And why, since the *choreutae* for the purpose of this rule never counted in the number of the 'actors' at all, should this case be regarded as exceptional or noticeable in any way? We shall see the reason presently.

We are not here concerned with the question how far the technical terms *παρὰσκήμιον* and *παρὰχορήγημα*, as here used, were either correct in themselves or generally recognized. As Pollux uses them they are in a way correlative, the chorus in the first place supplying something *extra* to the stage, the fourth actor in the second case being a sort of addition to the chorus.¹ We however are concerned only with the facts to which the terms are applied.

In order to show the bearing of this testimony on the question discussed in my book, I will now set out (1) the *dramatis personae* and distribution of the *Agamemnon*, as commonly printed; (2) the *dramatis personae* and distribution according to my edition. Those of the MSS. it is scarcely worth while to discuss. Nobody defends or is likely to defend them.

As commonly printed :

Dramatis personae.

A Watchman.

¹ For a comparison of the various uses of these terms, see Mr. Haigh, *The Attic Theatre*, note on p. 212, by which note my attention was called to the passage.

Chorus of Elders.

Clytaemnestra.

A Herald.

Agamemnon.

Cassandra.

Aegisthus.

These characters are distributed in the play as follows :

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. <i>Prologue.</i> | Watchman. |
| 2. <i>Parodos and</i> <i>Stas. 1.</i> | { Chorus. |
| 3. <i>Episode 1.</i> | { Clytaemnestra. Chorus. |
| 4. <i>Stas. 2.</i> | Chorus. |
| 5. <i>Episode 2.</i> | { Herald. Clytaemnestra. Chorus. |
| 6. <i>Stas. 3.</i> | Chorus. |
| 7. <i>Episode 3.</i> | { Agamemnon. Clytaemnestra. Cassandra (silent). |
| 8. <i>Stas. 4.</i> | Chorus. |
| 9. <i>Episode 4.</i> | { Clytaemnestra. Cassandra. Chorus. |
| 10. <i>Interlude</i> <i>(1331—1371</i> <i>Dindorf.)</i> | { Agamemnon (behind the scenes). Chorus. |
| 11. <i>Episode 5</i> <i>and Finale.</i> | { Clytaemnestra. Aegisthus. Chorus. |

It will be seen that there is here not the least trace of the 'fourth actor' found in the play by Pollux. Indeed it can scarcely be said that the play absolutely requires three. Very little ingenuity, certainly not more than the ancients employed, as we are told, to preserve their limitations in other places, would be required to enable the mute Cassandra of Episode 3 and the speaking Cassandra of Episode 4 to be taken by different maskers; and except at this point two actors, with the chorus, could easily perform the whole.

I will now set out the arrangements as in my recent edition.

Dramatis Personae.

A Watchman.

Chorus of Elders.

Clytaemnestra.

A Conspirator, leading the
Chorus of Conspirators.

A Herald.

Agamemnon.
Cassandra.
Aegisthus.
A Soldier of Aegisthus.

By these the different portions of the play are spoken or sung as follows :

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. <i>Prologue.</i> | Watchman. |
| 2. <i>Parodos and</i> <i>Stas. 1.</i> | { <i>Chorus of Elders.</i> |
| 3. <i>Episode 1.</i> | { Clytaemnestra. Conspirator. <i>Chorus of Elders.</i> <i>Chorus of Conspirators</i> |
| 4. <i>Stas. 2.</i> | <i>Chorus of Elders.</i> |
| 5. <i>Episode 2.</i> | { Conspirator. Herald. Clytaemnestra. <i>Chorus of Elders.</i> |
| 6. <i>Stas. 3.</i> | <i>Chorus of Elders.</i> |
| 7. <i>Episode 3.</i> | { Agamemnon. Clytaemnestra. Cassandra (silent). |
| 8. <i>Stas. 4.</i> | <i>Chorus of Elders.</i> |
| 9. <i>Episode 4.</i> | { Clytaemnestra. Cassandra. <i>Chorus of Elders.</i> |
| 10. <i>Interlude.</i> | { Agamemnon (behind the scenes). <i>Chorus of Elders.</i> |
| 11. <i>Episode 5</i> <i>and Finale.</i> | { Clytaemnestra. Conspirator. Aegisthus. Soldier. <i>Chorus of Elders.</i> |

Now if this was the arrangement known to Pollux, we can not only see at once the application of his remark, but can explain it with precision down to the minutest peculiarity. The greater part of the play, all but the last scene, can be performed by the regular three actors. But in the last scene there is a small fourth part, which answers exactly to the description of the ancient scholar. The scene consists of two sections, (1) a dialogue, partly iambic but chiefly lyric, conducted mainly by Clytaemnestra and the Coryphaeus (1371—1576), and (2) the finale, in iambic and trochaic, mainly conducted by Aegisthus, Clytaemnestra, and the Coryphaeus. These two sections however are perfectly continuous. There is no interval between them, and no legitimate opportunity for an exit. But

from the evidence of the text it appeared to me that in the finale one of the soldiers accompanying Aegisthus must have spoken twice, on each occasion one trochaic verse (1650 and 1653), and also that in the preceding lyric dialogue, at 1522 (1521 Dindorf), the words,

οὐτ' ἀνελεύθερον οἶμαι θάνατον
τῷδε γενέσθαι,—

which are usually struck out as inexplicable, must have been spoken by a partizan of Clytaemnestra, that is to say, by the Conspirator. I did not observe, what I ought no doubt to have observed, that, as it would be quite unnatural for the performer here taking the person of the Conspirator to leave the stage before the entrance of Aegisthus and his troop, I had thus made, to this small extent, a demand for a *fourth actor*. But all the more striking, I think, is the undesigned coincidence between my independent inference and the statement of Pollux.

For observe : the various parts were commonly assumed to be distributed among the actors in the order of their importance. In the *Agamemnon* the protagonist would of course play Clytaemnestra in the last scene as throughout. The deuteragonist would take Aegisthus. Of the two remaining parts, the Soldier, not the Conspirator, would be given to the regular tritagonist, as having two speeches to make instead of only one, and also as requiring much more impressive action. We should therefore naturally hold, as Pollux and his authorities held, that the speech of the Conspirator (1522—1523) must be regarded as the exceptional *fourth part*. It is in lyric metre (anapaests), not in the iambic of the ordinary dialogue ; and so it is described by Pollux. And, most remarkable of all, it is spoken by a person whose ambiguous character, between *choreutes* and actor, makes the peculiar language of his description quite simple and natural. The Conspirator is in a sense 'one of the *choreutae*.' He stands to the secondary chorus in much the same relation in which the regular Coryphaeus stands to the regular chorus ; and in fact in my edition I have, upon this analogy, marked his parts (as well as the one song of the sub-chorus) by the sign XO. β. On the other hand he is no member of the regular chorus but, in the common technical sense, a *ὑποκριτής*. When therefore, as at this place, he recites anapaests in a scene otherwise requiring the simultaneous presence of three speakers (in addition to the regular

chorus), he is what Pollux calls him, 'one of the *choreutae* speaking in lyric in the place of a fourth actor.'

I cannot but think that this absolute agreement between an inference drawn from MSS. of the fourteenth century and a statement dating from the second not only substantiates the inference, but also strongly fortifies the authority of our traditional text. The makers of our MSS. had, it is needless to say, not a notion of illustrating the observation of Pollux. The words to which his note refers are in the MSS. tacked, in defiance of grammar, to the following speech of Clytaemnestra, while in modern texts, as I have already said, they are desperately struck out. Yet there they stand in the *Codex Florentinus*, as they must have stood in the Aeschylus of Pollux, having survived the copyists of more than a millennium, to illustrate and justify the true tradition. Could there possibly be a fact more encouraging to the study of those materials from which our knowledge of Greek drama has been and is being built up?

What, it may be asked, have we done with the testimony of Pollux so long as we have endeavoured to distribute the *Agamemnon* so as to accord with the Byzantine story? It has been simply set aside, upon one of those transparent pretexts which we all employ when we are at a loss for arguments. The copyist of Pollux, it is said, introduced the reference to the *Agamemnon*

by error, because a few lines after came a reference, quite differently worded, to the *Memnon*. There is no one who will not gladly be relieved of the supposed necessity for such a hypothesis as this.

In conclusion I should like to call attention to the curious and unimpeachable evidence of the difficulties besetting the common distribution of the *Agamemnon*, which is furnished by the version of Fitzgerald. In the course of accommodating the earlier scenes of the play to a story and cast of characters for which they were never intended, it has been necessary, among other things, to assign to the same speaker two contradictory and irreconcilable speeches (317—319 and 351—354 Dindorf). We commentators, being compelled to preserve the whole, have pushed through the place as we could. But Fitzgerald did not so bind himself; and what does he do? He tacitly remodels the scene, fusing, modifying, and omitting, so that the contradiction wholly disappears. The significance of this is the greater, in that Mr. Fitzgerald was defending no theory and indeed had probably not the least idea that what he so calmly set aside was not the genuine arrangement of Aeschylus. But he saw, being free to see, that, Aeschylus or not, it was intolerable to his understanding: and he dealt with it accordingly.

A. W. VERRALL.

TABLE OF AFFINITY IN PLATO'S *REPUBLIC*.

In the *Republic* 459 E foll. Plato gives us the arrangements which are to take the place of marriage in his state. On certain festival days men and women covertly chosen by the guardians, though seemingly selected by lot, are to be joined in a union not lasting longer than the festivals themselves. There will not be more unions than are sufficient, taking one thing with another, to maintain the number of the male population; but nothing is said at first about prohibiting unions between near relations. The children are to be taken from their mothers and so brought up by the state that relationship to particular parents shall remain unknown. No child will know its parents, no parents their children. Men are to be eligible for these regular and legal unions between the ages of 25 and 55, women between 20 and 40. When they

have passed these ages and ceased 'bearing children to the state' (τίκτειν τῇ πόλει or γεννᾶν τῇ πόλει), they are to be at liberty to form irregular unions, any possible offspring of which is to be suppressed.

It is at this point that restrictions on the ground of relationship are first mentioned. A man, it is said, may form one of these irregular unions with any woman he pleases except daughter, granddaughter, mother and grandmother: and a woman with any man she pleases, not being son, grandson, father or grandfather.¹ Brothers and sisters are not mentioned in this particular sen-

¹ Plato says daughter, daughter's daughter, mother and mother's mother, and then again son, son's son, father and father's father. But these make up among them all grandchildren and grandparents; e.g. if a woman cannot marry her father's father, a man cannot marry his son's daughter.